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IT IS TIME TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

HON. BOB FILNER
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MR. FILNER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Davis) for yielding me the time.

I thank the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. Hefley) for introducing this very important resolution. I thank the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. Jo Ann Davis) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Davis) for their eloquent statements on behalf of law enforcement officers and how much they mean to our Nation.

I rise today, though, to point out an irony and hope to get support from my colleagues for law enforcement officers in our Federal agencies.

I hope that those who are on the floor today know that there are law enforcement officers throughout the Federal Government who protect us day and night. They may be in INS. They may be in U.S. Customs. They may be postal police. They may be police officers for the Veterans Administration. They work to protect our airports, the Library of Congress, the Supreme Court. They are members of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

These are law enforcement officers who do not have law enforcement status in terms of their pay and their retirement benefits. Mr. Speaker, these are people who are trained to carry a weapon. They wear bulletproof vests. They have a badge. They face the risk every day that police officers in our cities and States have to face.

I have watched mainly the inspectors at the U.S.-Mexico border in the district I represent in San Diego. I have watched members of the INS and U.S. Customs literally face death in confrontations with those who are trying to cross the border illegally or those who are

trying to bring drugs and probably at some future point with terrorists; and yet I say again they are trained as law enforcement officers. They have the risk of law enforcement officers, but they do not have the status of law enforcement officers. That means that they do not get either the pay or the retirement benefits of those who are so classified.

Mr. Speaker, we talk today about honoring our law enforcement officers, and how their names are engraved at the National Law Enforcement Memorial several blocks away. It is ironic that some of these people that I refer to in the Department of Customs or INS, their names are engraved on the Law Enforcement Memorial, and they are recognized as law enforcement officers when they died, but we do not recognize them as such when they are living when we should pay recognition to them.

I hope those who are honoring our law enforcement officers today will look at H.R. 1841, the Law Enforcement Equity Act. It has over 180 sponsors, Democrat and Republican, from all across the country. I think it is time as we think today of our peace officers and law enforcement officers all over this Nation who have died in the line of duty, as we recall September 11 and the bravery of our peace officers there, I think it is time to say to our officers throughout the Federal Government, let us recognize them, too. Let us classify, and take the training that they have been given and the risks that they face, and give them the status that they deserve. I hope as we all vote for this resolution on the floor, we will think about H.R. 1841, the Law Enforcement Equity Act, and move forward in those situations also.

